



## **Montana Growth Through Agriculture Program**

### **Program Information**

Proposals are accepted on a quarterly basis with the following postmark deadlines:  
January 31 ~ April 30 ~ July 31 ~ October 31

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***Return Proposals to:***

Montana Growth Through Agriculture Program  
Montana Department of Agriculture  
PO Box 200201  
Helena, MT 59620-0201  
406-444-2402

***Legal Authority:***

(MCA) Section 90-9-401 Montana Codes Annotated  
(ARM) Section 4.16.701 Administrative Rule of Montana



State of Montana  
Department of Agriculture  
AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL  
AGRICULTURE MARKETING & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT  
**Montana Growth Through Agriculture Program**

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**State of Montana**  
**Department of Agriculture**  
**Montana Growth Through Agriculture Program**  
**Program Information**

The Montana Growth Through Agriculture program was created by the 1987 Legislature to encourage economic development through innovations in various aspects of agricultural business. The program includes, among other things, the authority to establish development of an agricultural marketing and business development program.

The Montana Growth Through Agriculture Program is administered by the seven-member Montana Agriculture Development Council, which is attached to the Department of Agriculture.

**Goal: Strengthen and diversify Montana's agricultural industry**

The Montana Growth Through Agriculture program works to strengthen and diversify Montana's agricultural industry. Through monetary investments in projects, the program establishes public/private sector partnerships that assist in the development of innovative agricultural products and processes to add value to the agriculture industry, to create new jobs, and to expand small business opportunities.

***How the Program Works***

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Public and private entities and organizations, business and industry, educational institutions, local governments and individuals are eligible to submit proposals to the Montana Agriculture Development Council requesting an investment in a project. The Montana Agriculture Development Council reviews proposals on a quarterly basis to determine investments to be made in eligible projects.

Generally, to qualify for consideration, proposals must have practical, near-term application involving new or alternative technologies, practices or organizational arrangements that will stimulate expanded agricultural development, economic activity and employment growth.

The maximum limit in any one round of financing is \$50,000. Successive rounds of financing in which the Council participates for any one company may not occur within a nine-month period. The total amount of investment for any one company project may not exceed \$150,000.

**Type of Investments**

Public/private partnerships are established through the investment of Growth Through Agriculture funds in public or private projects. The Montana Agriculture Development Council determines the investments, and may elect to invest in a project through one of two avenues:

1. A **grant** is an award of money without the expectation that the funds will be repaid.

2. A **loan** is an award of money with the expectation that all or a portion of the money will be repaid after a deferral period. No payments are required, and no interest is accrued during the initial time period. After this time, the award recipient repays the investment plus interest over a period of up to seven years. Should the business close and cease to be in operation, the council has the option to forgive all or a portion of the repayment obligation. Security provisions may be required and may be structured on an individual case basis.

### **Deadline for Submittal**

Growth Through Agriculture Program proposals must be submitted to:

Montana Growth Through Agriculture Program  
Montana Department of Agriculture  
PO Box 200201  
Helena, MT 59620-0201

There are four funding cycles in each year. **Eleven (11) copies of the proposal must be postmarked no later than January 31, April 30, July 31, or October 31, to be considered for the funding cycle that follows each date.** Applicants are responsible for timely submission of proposals. Department of Agriculture staff members are available to review and provide feedback on draft applications submitted prior to an application deadline. To ensure adequate time for review and feedback, applicants are encouraged to submit drafts for review at least two weeks in advance of an application deadline.

### ***What Qualifies***

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#### **Project Eligibility**

Proposals must be responsive to the goals of the Montana Growth Through Agriculture program. Each proposal must be limited to one project or activity only. Projects should:

- Involve new or alternative production, processing, or distribution and marketing technologies, practices or organizational arrangements.
- **Specifically demonstrate a potential for further development of Montana's agricultural industry.**
- Be undertaken in Montana. Proposals for projects to be conducted outside Montana must present clear evidence that the Montana agriculture industry will benefit from the activity.

**The potential for near-term commercial application or use of the project results is a major consideration in proposal evaluation.**

## Eligible Costs

Eligible costs under the Growth Through Agriculture Program include, but are not limited to:

- Consultant Services (professional, technical, operational)
- Travel
- Advertising and Promotion
- Equipment
- Supplies and Materials
- Communication (telephone, postage, printing, etc.)
- Data Processing

*\*\*Project costs cannot be submitted for activities completed prior to council approval of the project\*\**

Other eligible costs can rarely include salaries and wages. **Program funds cannot be used for the payment of institutional overhead or other indirect costs.** These costs may be used as in-kind matching contributions from the applicant. In no case can funds be used for political purposes.

For the purposes for the GTA program, matching contributions are funds directed toward completing the project, which are from private, federal, state or commodity check-off sources, **in an amount that is at least equal to the GTA funds requested for the project.** Matching contributions may not include other state grants. Matching contributions may be provided in the form of cash, in-kind services, or other resources, indirect or overhead costs, or a combination of the above. Matching contributions may be provided by the project sponsor or by other supporter(s), and should be contributed as a direct result of the project, not as a result of normal day-to-day operations.

## ***Who Can Apply***

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Proposals for funding are accepted from:

- Individuals
- Businesses and Industry Organizations
- Public and Private Agencies and Organizations
- Educational Institutions
- Local Governments

Two or more individuals or organizations may propose to conduct a project jointly by submitting one application as co-applicants.

Applicants must demonstrate a proven ability to carry out all elements of the proposed project. In addition, applicants proposing to rely upon the expertise of another individual or organization to undertake any part of the project must clearly define the responsibilities of that party as well as provide evidence of that entity's willingness and demonstrated ability to undertake that area of responsibility.

Employees of the Montana Department of Agriculture and the Montana Department of Commerce and their immediate families, and members of the Montana Agriculture Development Council and their immediate families are excluded from eligibility for funding under the GTA Program. Immediate family includes mother, father, brother, sister, spouse and children.

## ***How to Apply***

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Please refer to the “Application Instructions” segment of this document for application procedures.

The application should provide members of the Montana Agriculture Development Council with sufficient information to determine that the proposed activity utilizes a sound approach, is cost efficient, enhances agricultural economic activity and development as outlined in the application, and merits financial support. Proposals will be judged principally on adherence or conformity to the objectives and criteria indicated and appropriate rules and statutes. The Council will conduct a meeting, at which time the applicant may make a presentation in person. The Council will then make a decision whether to fund the project and notify the applicant within 30 days.

**Submission of a completed application for funding explicitly authorizes the Department of Agriculture and the Council to make inquiries as necessary, including requesting a credit report.** Financial information attained through such inquiries will be held confidential.

## ***How Projects are Selected***

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The Montana Agriculture Development Council meets on a quarterly basis to review project proposals and select which projects will be funded. Successful projects are funded through investment agreements under the Growth Through Agriculture Program.

### **Selection Criteria**

Selection of successful proposals will be on a competitive basis. All proposals will be judged against the following criteria, consistent with the stated objectives of the program:

1. Degree to which the proposed activity addresses a significant industry need or opportunity and evidence of industry support of such an activity.
2. Demonstrated experience and ability of applicant to undertake proposed activity.
3. Clearly demonstrated potential for near-term commercial application in terms of job creation, capital investment or other identifiable economic activity.
4. Adequacy of work plan and time frame to achieve the activity goals.
5. Degree of innovation and originality of proposed activity.

In addition, all proposals must include sufficient information to allow the above factors to be judged. Only those proposals that furnish complete information will be considered for evaluation. No partial proposals will be considered. The Montana Agriculture Development Council reserves the right to make a final selection or reject all proposals.

### **Awarding Process**

Applicants selected by the Council for funding will be notified by telephone within one week of the award and investment type. If accepted by the applicant, a contract will be developed by the Council to define all project terms, conditions and responsibilities of the applicant. The contract will, in addition, clarify all legal patents and proprietary rights that will result from the proposed activity. The contract will incorporate the successful application among its provisions. Once the contract is reviewed and signed by all applicable parties, a check(s) will be issued to the recipient as outlined by a payment schedule determined most appropriate by the Council at the time of award.

Selected projects must comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws, licensing and regulations for funds to be awarded. Evidence of such compliance may be required before the investment check(s) is issued.

Applicants not chosen for funding will be notified in writing within 30 days by the Council. The notification will include an explanation of the Council's reasons for not funding the proposal.

### ***Reporting Requirements for Funded Projects***

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The Council reserves the right to determine the extent of reporting requirements, subject to modification over the course of the project. Interim reporting requirements will be based on the cost, duration and nature of the project. Typically, award recipients are required to submit a status report on the project and budget report on a quarterly basis. The Montana Agriculture Development Council and staff will be responsible for monitoring each funded project.

The award recipient will be **required to submit a comprehensive final report** upon the completion of the project. The final report should include:

- A comparison of actual findings and accomplishments of the project with goals and objectives described in proposal.
- Reasons for deviation from established goals of proposal.
- A clear description of the commercial application and economic benefits which accrued during the course of the project.
- A description of its immediate impacts.
- An estimate of its long-term commercial and economic benefits.

The recipient may be required to make an oral report to the Council at the conclusion of the project. The oral report would be made at a regularly scheduled Council meeting. The Council also reserves the right to conduct a follow-up survey of funded projects in order to determine long-term impacts.

## ***Other Considerations***

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### **Ownership And Publication Of Materials**

All information and materials generated by the proposed activity become the sole property of the State of Montana. The investment recipient will retain the right to utilize, reprint and distribute all said information and materials.

### **Intellectual Property**

All intellectual property rights including patents, copyrights, trademarks and trade secrets developed by a loan recipient with use of GTA funds provided by the council shall be owned by the recipient upon repayment.

### **Liability**

The Montana Agriculture Development Council will not be held liable for any costs incurred by any firm for work performed in the preparation of and production of a proposal or for any works performed prior to the formal execution of a contract.

### **Confidentiality**

All materials developed for an investment proposal, as a result of an investment agreement and/or documents submitted to the Council shall be considered public except any information in which there is a privacy interest and that interest and the demands of individual privacy clearly exceed the merits of public disclosure of the personal, financial, and business information contained therein.

### **Rights of Council**

The Council reserves the right to:

- Reject any or all proposals received.
- Waive or modify minor irregularities in proposals received after prior notification and concurrence of applicant.
- Clarify the scope of this application, within the program requirements and with appropriate notice to all applicants, to best serve the interests of the state of Montana.
- Amend the application's specifications after their release, with appropriate written notice to all potential applicants.
- Require a good faith effort on the part of the project sponsors to work with the Council and the Department of Agriculture.
- Request a credit report, recent tax filing, or financial statement to clarify program eligibility.

## **Agriculture Marketing and Business Development Bureau**

Contact the Agriculture Marketing and Business Development Bureau staff at (406) 444-2402 or by e-mail at [agr@mt.gov](mailto:agr@mt.gov) for assistance on your business and marketing needs.

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Perri A. Walborn

***Bureau Chief***

Overall marketing, business development and oversight

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Collin Watters

***Growth Through Agriculture Program Manager***

Growth Through Agriculture program administration

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Chad Lee

***Business Development Officer***

Business Assistance

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Virginia Harrington

***Industry & Commodity Development Officer***

Industry & commodity development

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Cassie Egbert

***Marketing Officer***

International agricultural product marketing

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Marty Earnheart

***Marketing Officer***

Meats & livestock marketing

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Angelyn DeYoung

***Marketing Officer***

Domestic agricultural product marketing

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Lindra Davies

***Marketing Technician***

Growth Through Agriculture program/marketing coordination

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Tracey Jette

***Network Coordinator***

Bio-Product Innovation Centers

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**Services and Support Available**

With a full staff, each focused on a particular area in the business of agriculture, the Department's Marketing and Business Development Bureau is well equipped to assist you in meeting the needs of your agribusiness. We will:

- Assist in the gathering of resources needed to develop and capitalize your venture.
- Provide valuable contacts in your industry or related industries.
- Serve as a liaison or matchmaker to develop a relationship with organizations new to your operation.
- Assist businesses entering new markets or working to expand your market share in existing markets.